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THESIS**
Literature and
Civilization

**A Woman's Journey to Self-assertiveness in Guzel Yakhina's
*Zuleikha Opens her Eyes***

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
Degree in Literature

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DEDICATIONS

I thank Allah for granting me strength to finish my thesis

I dedicate this humble work to my family

To My Beloved Mother

To My Father, My Perfect Mentor

My Brothers and Sisters,

My strength and my weakness

Thank you for your endless support.

To my friends: Ranya, Rayane, Soumia, Messaouda, Youssra, and Fatima, with whom I made the most treasurable memories. Memories, which would last for eternity to remember.

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ABSTRACT

Self-assertiveness became a point of interest to multiple academic studies due to its psychological and social influence. Russian women writers, mainly Guzel Yakhina, stress on the inquiry of women's self-assertiveness, where the quest for identity, self-awareness, and mental emancipation of women's psyche is a requirement in a patriarchal society. This study is an attempt to examine, from various Psychoanalytic and Feminist perspectives, the quest for Self-assertiveness of Zuleikha, the protagonist of Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. A Feminist Theory is used to project a woman's image on the patriarchal environment. Similarly, *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* portrays the feminist experiences of the main female character as she conceives her identity in relation to the male environment surrounding her. Psychoanalytic Feminism as a theory is also relied on to examine the oppressive male conduct and the female's openness to subjugation and submissiveness. The researcher, on the other hand, uses Psychoanalytic Approach to deconstruct the main character Zuleikha and her struggle to fulfill the journey to self-assertiveness. Women's mental emancipation serves in the strengthening self-assertive conduct of the protagonist as it reshaped her psyche, while patriarchal norms imposed on her urged transgressing such conventions and helped in the metamorphosis of Zuleikha

Keywords: Feminist Theory, Identity, Patriarchal Society, Psychoanalytic Feminism, Self-assertiveness, Women Emancipation

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the content of this dissertation is purely the result of my research, and that appropriate references or acknowledgements to the work of other researchers are made where required.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amer", written over a thin horizontal line.

Amer Lazreg

Table of Content

Table des matières

DEDICATIONS	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	III
DECLARATION.....	IV
Table of Content	V

General Introduction

Introduction	1
Rationale of the Study	2
Statement of the Problem	2
Research Question	2
Research Methodology.....	3
Hypothesis	4
Objectives of the Study	4
Scope and Limitation.....	4
Chapters Demarcation	5

Chapter One: Zuleikha Opens her Eyes: Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Russian Literature.....	8
1.2.1 Russian Women Literature	9
1.2.2 Issues in Russian Women Literature	11
1.3 Guzel Yakhina's Works	12
1.3.1 My Children.....	13

1.3.2 Zuleikha Opens her Eyes.....	14
1.4 The Selected Novel Main Themes	16
1.4.1 Exile.....	16
1.4.2 Identity.....	18
1.5 Conclusion.....	20

Chapter Two: Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, and Self-assertiveness:

Theoretical Debate

2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Feminism	23
2.2.1 Definition.....	24
2.2.2 Waves of Feminism.....	25
2.3 Psychoanalytic Feminism.....	27
2.3.1 Definition.....	28
2.3.2 Psychoanalytic Feminism critique.....	30
2.4 Self-assertiveness	31
2.4.1 Definition.....	31
2.4.2 Types of Assertiveness	33
2.5 Conclusion.....	34

Chapter Three: Zuleikha Opens her Eyes: A Journey Fulfilled

3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 The Silenced	37
3.3 Transgressing Conventions	42
3.4 Forging New Path in Life	45
3.5 Conclusion.....	49
General Conclusion	51

Bibliography	55
Appendices	60
Glossary	63
ملخص	65

General Introduction

Introduction

Perestroika and Glasnost initiatives of the late 1980s played a major role in the emergence of Russian women's writings. Only then did Russian women's works flourish, and they are said to have outperformed male-dominated writings. By significance, modern and contemporary Russian women's literature reflects women's distraught souls, with little disregard to social, cultural, moral, and philosophical frameworks. Russian women's literature is primarily concerned with emancipating women's social and ideological positions, as well as the deconstruction of feminine paradigm as portrayed by patriarchal supremacy.

Guzel Yakhina, as contemporary writer, attempts to reflect the experiences and realities through the representation of her female characters, who break their way through life by retaining a sense of non-conformity, the ability to persevere through life's challenges, and the capacity to interact within romantic relationships. Yakhina's interests are not only gender-specific, but she is as well preoccupied with the larger problem of conflict, as well as humanity's past and future. For her, war and culture are impersonal constructs, and the effects of these constructs can only be true if they are experienced personally.

Guzel Yakhina's debut novel *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* follows the story of the main character Zuleikha, a peasant Tatar woman. Her husband resisted the Soviet Union campaign of dekulakization and was murdered as a result. She was transported to Siberia and abandoned in a remote location along the Angara River with little resources. Zuleikha had to persevere in the face of adversity, form bonds with other exiles, and forge a new identity and purpose for survival. As based on Guzel Yakhina's grandmother experiences in exile, *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* portrays the metamorphosis of a woman; a woman's quest for identity; a woman's self-assertiveness.

In *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*, Yakhina stresses on the theme of self-assertiveness by

drawing the picture of the paradoxical shift of the main female character. The journey to self-recognition of a woman requires the intersection of the political, cultural, ethnic, and social circumstances. This intersection made the main character's (Zuleikha) new identity floats to the top with the dismissal of her former, superstitious, subjugated self, to the free, liberated, self-aware embracement of her current entity. Women's self-assertiveness holds a prestigious place in Russian women fiction on the account of its significance in portraying the female's emancipation in male-dominant societies.

Rationale of the Study

The basis on which *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* was chosen for study is because it focuses on the examination of women's literature in general, and Russian women writings in particular. Furthermore, an intrinsic motivation is provided to the researcher for the presented literary analysis. The requirement for undertaking the following research is suggested by the scarcity of studies on Russian socio-political and historical fiction. In addition, Russian literature shapes not only a national cultural code but also a way of feeling and thinking that defined the Russian individual. Moreover, Russian literature is demanded to place Russian matters on a world basis, and link personal and collective experiences and reconstruct the present history from the Russian women writers' perspective.

Statement of the Problem

Due to its psychological and social influence, women's self-assertiveness became a point of interest to multiple academic studies. Russian women writers, mainly Guzel Yakhina, stress on the inquiry of women's self-assertiveness, where the quest for identity, self-awareness, and the emancipation of the female's psyche is a need in a patriarchal society.

Research Question

To what extent does self-assertiveness serve reshaping woman' identity in Guzel Yakhina's

*Zuleikha Opens her Eyes?***Sub questions**

- How does Russian women literature portray the theme of self-assertiveness?
- What symbolizes the theme of self-assertiveness in *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*?
- In what way self-assertiveness has projected the women character?

Research Methodology

The present study suggests an eclectic methodology of theories and approaches to the analysis of women's self-assertiveness case of the main female character in Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. The crucial theories and approaches, which this research involves, are:

- **Feminism**

Russian women writers are intrigued by the projection of the women's image on the patriarchal environment. Similarly, Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* portrays the feminist experiences of the main female character as she conceives her identity in relation to the male environment surrounding her. It is, as well, a representation of a female's repression of romantic desires in favour of motherhood demands, and the struggle of the contradictions of a female's self-awareness as synchronized with the responsibilities towards others. It is, thus, prioritizes the accommodations of the rational self rather than the insistence on individualistic dictates.

- **Psychoanalytic Approach**

The change of political, social, and cultural scenes amid the Soviet Union Era has their impact on psyche of the Russian women. Accordingly, this change can be the cause of multiple psychological traumas among Russian women of the era. Thus, a Psychoanalytic Approach is applied in deciphering the psyche of the main character (Zuleikha) in her

journey towards self-assertiveness.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that:

- Women's self-assertiveness is the aftermath of the imposed patriarchal norms.
- Women's self-assertiveness is the cause for the women's mental emancipation.

Objectives of the Study

- To display the way Guzel Yakhina introduce self-assertiveness on a female character in *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*.
- To examine Russian writings, mainly women's, and its significance among universal literature.
- To explore the rendition of crucial themes such as exile, and the quest for identity.

Scope and Limitation

The focus of present research is on self-assertiveness pursuit exercised by the female main character (Zuleikha) in Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. The study, however, is about the psychological and feminist experiences, which assisted on the reformation of a woman's identity from a subjugated Tatar society to a self-aware, independent woman. The researcher attempts to introduce the framework of the process to self-assertiveness as well as the potential implications of the latter on the main character's psyche.

Chapters Demarcation

This study consist of three chapters. Each chapter aims at exploring an aspect from the following investigation in the larger scale of the issue. The first chapter of the research, as entitled Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes: Theoretical Framework* deals from a historical perspective with Russian Literature in general, and Russian Women Literature in specific dealing with the main issues tackled in Russian Women Literature. The chapter also introduce the main works of Guzel Yakhina while also introducing the main themes presented in her work *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. The second chapter, which is entitled *Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, and Self-assertiveness: Theoretical Debate*, presents an eclectic methodology of Feminist Theory and Psychoanalytic Approach. The researcher provides an overview of Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, and Self-assertiveness in this chapter. In the third chapter, the researcher explores in three main titles: *The Silenced, Transgressing Conventions, and Forging a New Path in Life*, to examine the hardships and the achievements of the protagonist Zuleikha, in her journey to self-assertiveness.

*Chapter One: Zuleikha Opens her Eyes: Theoretical
Framework*

Table of Contents

1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Russian Literature.....	8
1.2.1 Russian Women Literature	9
1.2.2 Issues in Russian Women Literature	11
1.3 Guzel Yakhina's Works	12
1.3.1 My Children.....	13
1.3.2 Zuleikha Opens her Eyes.....	14
1.4 The Selected Novel Main Themes	16
1.4.1 Exile.....	16
1.4.2 Identity.....	18
1.5 Conclusion.....	20

1.1 Introduction

The classical works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky of the Golden Age mainly represent Russian Literature's breakthrough universality. However, its significant streak is yet maintained through the works of a number of writers. Similarly, Guzel Yakhina, among other woman writers, aims at exploring the paradoxical viewpoint of tragedy and horror, yet the forged hope and aspiration imposed in the Russian recent past, alongside with the portrayal of women's revival from the ashes in such defying circumstances. Her works shed the light on delicate historical events amid the Soviet Union Era. Thus, ethnic issues, identity struggles, survival motives, and refusal of femininity stereotypes are introduced. Furthermore, the Russian literature seeks a nostalgic flashback to the past with maintaining the current style, themes and techniques of the modern era.

1.2 Russian Literature

The flexibility of Russian literature with the cultural, political and existential concerns is significant. Nineteenth century Russian literature, labeled as the golden age of Russian literature, introduces multiple reforms in writing styles and trends, materialization in the Russian modern language, and the birth of outstanding Russian writers including Nikolai Gogol, Alexander Pushkin, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Writers and poets of the Golden Age aim at presenting the prevalence matters of the Russian society and politics of the era. However, philosophical issues are likewise discussed. The discovery of oneself and society through metaphysical disconnection, the thirst for stability, and salvation throughout torment are major themes.

Accordingly, twentieth century Russian literature is marked by the influence of the constant changes in political and cultural spheres of Soviet Union Era. The exploitation of Russian literature by the Soviet Union as a tool of propaganda was the core object, and thus,

Socialist Realism was imposed as the predominant style. It restricted the literary forms to a sole realist depiction of Soviet ideals and utopian values, severe censorship, lack of literary freedom, and the isolation of literature from émigrés and underground writings. In his book, *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, Charles Moser states:

Socialist realism, the fundamental method of Soviet artistic literature and literary criticism, demands of the artist a truthful and historically specific depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. At the same time this truthfulness and historical specificity in the depiction of reality must be linked to the task of ideologically remolding and educating the workers in the spirit of socialism. (459)

The late of the twentieth century ended Socialist Realism, synchronized with the fall of the Soviet Union. However, fragmentation and vagueness haunted Russian literature. By the beginning of twenty-first century, the revival of Russian literature falls on the modern writers' shoulders. Modern writers, mainly women such as Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, compel to shift the literary experience from the socio-cultural, psychological, and post-soviet mourning, to mirroring the aspects of history and humanities on current life situations. Subsequently, contemporary Russian writers such as Guzel Yakhina aspire to portray the perception of Russian literature's future by the establishment of positive notions, with sustaining the traditional values of Russian fiction.

1.2.1 Russian Women Literature

Russian women literature significantly aims at emancipating women's position, socially and ideologically; alongside the destruction of the feminine stereotype sketched by patriarchal dominance. P Jimly, in his thesis, *The Theme of Family and Familial Relations in the Short Fiction of Russian and Malayalam Women Writers: Natalia Baranskaya and*

Kamala Das, writes:

Women's literature is the voice of a group of people who have remained oppressed, ignored and rejected by centuries of biases and vested political interests of the dominant males who, always aligns with each other, reduce womanhood to typical characteristics of inadequacy, impurity, frailty and eternal silence. (26-27)

From the early Russian women writings of the nineteenth century such as Elena Gan, Maria Zhukova, and Nadazhda Durova, to the late modern and contemporary works of Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Ludmila Ulitskaya, Tatiana Tostaya, and Guzel Yakhina, common themes of motherhood, family, love, and women struggles became hallmarks for their works.

Russian woman writings have emerged by the late 1980s' Perestroika and Glasnost¹ policies. It is only then that Russian women writings thrived; and is said to overachieve the male-dominant writings. Modern and Contemporary Russian women literature by significance display the reflection of women's disturbed souls, with no oblivion to the social, moral, and philosophical frameworks. Contemporary woman writers as: Nina Sadur, Ludmila Ulitskaya, Tatiana Tolstaya and Guzel Yakhina attempt to introduce their experiences and realities through the portrayal of their female characters; the latter break their way through life by maintaining a sense of non-conformity, the endurance of life hardships, and the ability to engage in romantic relationships. In this vein, Barker and Gheith, in their book *A History of Women's Writing in Russia* argue that contemporary woman writers: "endorsed literature as a gender-inflected entity, featured unsubmitive female protagonists, and highlighted women's concerns; all focused on contemporary life; most relied to varying degrees on modernist techniques" (301).

¹ Social, political and economic reforms introduced by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1980

Guzel Yakhina, among Modern Russian women writers, concerns herself primarily with female characters and their predicament, but her concerns are not gender-specific. She is preoccupied with the broader issue of conflict, humanity's nature, and its future. History and culture are impersonal constructs for her, and their consequences can only be valid if they are felt personally. She is concerned about women's impulses and passions, which they are expected to disregard due to patriarchy. She is occupied by the histories of women, which male scholars have opted out of their works. Her writings explore women's cultural expectations, which she depicts through charismatic female characters searching for their identities and rebelling against violence in their nation. Her characters' pain and sorrow are intimate, but they are replicated throughout her writings, and they thus take widely accepted qualities.

1.2.2 Issues in Russian Women Literature

The inevitability of Russian women writer's struggle towards literary independence and marking new perceptions coined the universal women issues as the main concern of Russian women writers. Their major quest is the manifestation of feminist views, which include equality and justice in a male-dominant society. They struggle to impose the female's identity by the elimination of the stereotype, which states that a woman's eloquence is her silence. Similarly, their works tend to tackle the cultural and societal issues of the Russian reality:

The fundamental assumptions of patriarchal ideology — the perception of woman as object, 'immanence', 'nature', passivity or death, as opposed to man as subject, 'transcendence', 'culture', activity and life, have dominated all aspects of Russian social, political and cultural life. Many Russian women writers and critics too — along with western critics of Russian

literature - have internalized this objectified vision. (qtd. in Marsh 3)

Russian woman writings attempt to spread hope and aspirations to overcome the turmoil of the Russian troubled past. Russian women writers assume the responsibility to introduce the political and historical issues of the Soviet Era, mainly the psychological aftermath, which was not processed in a proper manner. Russian women literature is harshly open to criticism and is often put under comparison to that of men's. It is assumed to be a literature driven by emotion and lacks logic and conscious thinking. It deals with female concerned issues as motherhood, friendship between women, and love. To quote, Marsh says; "Russian male writers and critics have frequently been unduly harsh and dismissive in their judgments of women writers, probably because they have felt threatened by them or have had little interest in the themes they have chosen to treat" (2). While both sexes are able to be creative, the spheres in which Russian women and men writings are as distinct as two different universes.

Russian women literature has suffered the double burden constituted by the political regimes of the country, as well as the gender biases within the literary environment. In her book *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives*, Rosalind Marsh states: "it can be argued that, while this is undeniably true, some women writers have been unfortunate enough to suffer twice over, from both political and patriarchal persecution" (Marsh 6).

1.3 Guzel Yakhina's Works

Yakhina sculpts her exquisite works flawlessly; her unique descriptive style of portraying events is captivating, and her moulding of characters remains impressive. Yakhina's writings by excellence depict historical contexts; her fascination with the Soviet Union Era makes it the core of her works; however, cultural, ethnic, social, and moral values are not ignored. Her two life works: *Zuleika Opens her Eyes* and *My Children* are a

representation of her hope and aspirations in writing.

1.3.1 My Children

My Children is Guzel Yakhina's second novel. As a debutante in the history of modern Russian literature, Yakhina follows the steps of her debut novel: *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* to enjoin once more the historical context, where themes of ethnicity, culture, and people's destinies are presented. *My Children* is a depiction of the Volga Germans' way of life from the tragic fate to the exotic folklore, which was opt to destruction by the deportation of 1941 (Fyodorova). Yakhina, about her novel, states:

“I wanted to tell you about the world of the German Volga region - bright, original, and alive, about the world that was once created by newcomers in a foreign country, but today it is lost in the past. But it is also a story about how great love creates fears in our hearts and at the same time helps to overcome them.” (qtd. in Fyodorova)

My Children, which depicts Yakhina's grandfather experiences, is the story of Schulmeister Jacob Bach, whom for the past 22 years has been watching what happens in the Volga region. Moreover, significant events occur: main Civil War events, hunger in 1921, hunger in 1932, and widespread collectivization. Then significant history intervenes in the hero's life, forcing him into tumultuous relationships with women, forced parenthood, feeding, and her schooling. He is unaware of how he transforms into a true hero. It is the story of how Big History and Big Culture influenced a particular identity (Fyodorova). In the novel, German culture plays a significant role: the protagonist invents fairy tales or, more specifically, translates folk plots he knows from childhood into literary language.

Volga Germans, their culture, rituals, beliefs, superstitions, and fairy tales are covered

in a cultural and ethnographic line. Hence, by reading the novel, one can get a sense of who they are. Yakhina held responsibility to consider their mind-set, and recognize the main myths that shaped their consciousness. Moreover, a historical and political layer, which explains the Volga Germans' relationship with the country through the eyes of its governor, Josef Stalin, is available. Stalin is not addressed by his given name. However, he is easily recognizable from the first few lines. He is referred to by various names, including Guest, impersonal "It", and Leader. Yakhina, thus, creates his thought process and use metaphors to describe the events in relations between the Soviet German people and the Soviet world (Fyodorova).

A metaphysical layer is also present. One of the novel's key themes is the balance between love and fear. It is the thread, which glues the story together. Fear and passion are likewise prominent themes. Love is characterized in a broad sense, encompassing not only love for a woman or a man, but also love for one's homeland, the great river on which the heroes dwell, children, and art. The writer imagines how fear and love coexisted in the human entities, how fears emerged – the fear of losing the person you care for, the fear of losing the children you cherish, the fear of losing the fruits of your labour. The way fears can be conquered is by love and art. One other method of overcoming fears is rational, philosophic, and involves thought, acknowledging doubts, and developing knowledge over time (Fyodorova). The novel is about overcoming fears through passion and art, as well as having a philosophical perspective on life in general.

1.3.2 Zuleikha Opens her Eyes

Guzel Yakhina's novel *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is regarded as one of most influential literary works in Russian women literature, with a well-structured plot, nuance in the

transmission of both the color of the sky over the Taiga and a baby's¹ first-time view of the world, and a significant number of potent scenes (Kazbek). It is the winner of the Big Book literary prize, and the Yasnaya Polyana Literary Award; it gains attention in the English-speaking world with the superb translation provided by Lisa C Hayden.

Based on her grandmother's life story, Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha* is a masterclass in demonstrating macro issues through a micro vision. The novel begins with the line *Zuleikha* opens her eyes, which also occurs to be the genuine title in Russian literature, and traces the protagonist through her dysfunctional home's physical experiences. Even though the point of view changes after *Zuleikha*'s departure for Siberia to provide interiority to other characters, the intimacy between *Zuleikha* and the reader remains strongly felt throughout the novel, providing a unique insight into a woman's awakening. By definition, novels about Stalin's purges and Gulags, including Holocaust literature, are seldom uplifting, and *Zuleikha* is no exception (Kazbek).

However, just as the reader, already familiar with *Zuleikha*'s domestic oppression and unfulfilled motherhood traumas, watches her slip fully into the harsh reality of internment, she astonishes with an unexpected feminist revival. *Zuleikha*, no stranger to adversity, sets out on a journey to find happiness in her trials. *Zuleikha* appears to be bearing twice as many burdens as the other prisoners because she is a mother, a widow, and a Muslim woman (Kazbek).

Yakhina is no stranger to cliffhangers and hyperbolic plot twists, and the novel is pulsing with suspense. But the story's twists and turns are not only plot devices; they are indeed instruments for successfully explaining the various forms that life can take while also playing with reality's malleability. It is through the writer's faithful imagination as well, that the reader gains a multi-faceted, structured understanding of some of the most crucial

¹ A reference to Yuzuf, the protagonist's son who was the first child to be born in the settlement

moments in the history of Soviet era, alongside the country's postcolonial baggage, through an engaging narrative that invites interpretation (Kazbek).

1.4 The Selected Novel Main Themes

The works of Guzel Yakhina explores a variety of themes. Exile, assimilation, acculturation, displacement, and nostalgia for a lost homeland, as well as issues of identity formation, are commonly listed. Yakhina's works stresses as well on the experiences of social injustice, ethnic tensions, economic inequalities, traditional constraints and prospects, and ideological discrepancies.

1.4.1 Exile

Exile, as defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica, is: "a prolonged absence from one's country imposed by the vested authority as a punitive measure" (631). It entails the alienation from one's own home, people, and country. Exile may be for a variety of purposes, ranging from overtly political to strategically barred admission, from fear of retaliation to death or incarceration. Exile extends from being a banishment fueled by political motivations, to constructs that are socially and culturally built. Exile as well tolerates to be interpreted in a variety of ways, ranging in severity from moderate to extreme:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (Said 180)

In their new world, as well as with themselves, culturally displaced people in exile feel traumatized, unsafe, and helpless. Reading his reflections on exile and the exilic situation, home for Edward Said seems to be an uncharted territory, an inexperienced origin. When Said's perspective on exile is broken down into four analytical divisions, each of which defines social power relations, it becomes fathomable. These categories are: space, time, knowledge/power, and desire, according to Ling's paper entitled: *Said's Exile: Strategic Insights for Postcolonial Feminists*, Exile, she writes: "becomes an outward space, while home becomes an inner space, a gaze from the outside, a fixed familiar territory. "Home signifies stability; exile signifies the polar opposite" (4). Home is a non-negotiable place, settled, comforting, and embracing, while exile is a zone of perpetual struggle and bargaining, often unsettled (Baidwan 92).

Time, as the second category implies that: "Home is now and forever; exile, never or yet to be" (4). Home is a persistent presence, returning recurrently in exile through longing and remembrance. Exile never appears to measure up to the memory's immortalized home. The third category Knowledge/Power's signification stands for: "Those at home have power; those in exile question that power" (4). In the fact that home is synonymous with control and authority, one constantly queries and suspects the person in power. There is a lot of variation in the divisions of space, time, and knowledge/power. Said also claimed that while intelligence and authority are commonplace at home, exile allows for legitimate resentment and dissidence. Desire, as the fourth and last category, suggests that: "you can't go/come home again" (4) includes both exile and home. Exile constantly saving a massive amount of aspiration to return to his roots, whereas those who remained at home are considered to be fulfilled and satisfied. Internally, all four areas are related and associate with one another.

It is crucial to comprehend the dynamic of an exiles' psyche in order to comprehend

the primary reason for abandoning the homeland and what awaits the exile in the future. Political and economic turmoil, brutal dictatorships, fallen regimes, and thwarted conspiracies are initial grounds to the existence of exile. Hence, it is a necessity to point out to the cultural, social, and psychological dilemmas that accompany the exiles as of emotional distress, psychiatric suffering, unjust prosecutions, unlawful imprisonments, identity crises and duality, "Exile as a theoretical concept, a psychological condition, or a concrete experience is marked by duality. At the core of this duality lies the divided identity of exiles, once they have been banished from a place of belonging to a place that is perceived as other and foreign" (Bethea and Siggy 195).

1.4.2 Identity

The psychological definition of identity is one's mental self-perception, confidence, and singularity. Furthermore, a personality's development requires a process of gradually improving one's self over time. The term "identity" encompasses both internal and external facets of an individual's self, personality, and status in society. It also includes the two facets of the human self and its relationship to others some others. It has been defined as a complex framework that can be changed, adapted, and capable of balancing various factors in a harmonious coexistence (Jaganathan 85).

In psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them (Erikson 22).

Erikson, herby, claims that a person's personality is formed in relation to his social context. His theory suggests that one's sense of belonging in social gatherings has a significant impact on personality development. Participation in gatherings, as well as one's assessment of this participation, is an important part of one's self-reflection. As a result, an integration of human identity and social character is created. Erikson implies the significance of identity formation as a result of the individual's interaction with surrounding environment; however, identity might be distorted by the individual's uproot due to exile, with the reflections of frustration and identity crisis amplified by displacement of culture and geography.

Many internal and environmental variables contribute to the quest or the reinvention of identity in exile. These aspects become apparent in terms of the psychological influence that the individual's family and society have on him or her. The geographical shift also represents a shift from living under tyranny to combating injustice in general. They can redefine their bounds in a new nation by shattering cultural barriers and opting to live a life on their own terms rather than as imposed by exile. Exiles engage in the reinvention of their identity by speaking up about their suppressed experiences.

However, identity in exile is complex by a variety of factors, including the interpretation of one's past, personal history, cultural homeland, viewpoint on one's current context and history, and others' reactions to it all. "Identity in the contemporary world derives from a multiplicity of sources from nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender, sexuality sources that may conflict with the construction of identity positions and lead to contradictory fragmented identities," writes Kathryn Woodward in *Identity and Difference* (1). Identity formation or construction is a delicate task of independent research since identity may take several forms, including lost identity, reconstructed identity, quest for identity, and identity crisis.

1.5 Conclusion

The debate over contemporary Russia's culture, history, and destiny is reflected in modern Russian women's writing. Their current struggle is to discuss the stratification and shift of Russian culture due to historical, social and ethnic diversity, which draws Russian authors to identify within the Russian local and the international level. Russian women writings break their way through by overcoming difficult circumstances. Therefore, it is now widely recognized globally, however; it fights valiantly for its emancipation. The recognition, which Guzel Yakhina among other modern writers presented the Russian novel to the world's stage, allows it to introduce its image and purpose in the global context.

*Chapter Two: Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, and
Self-assertiveness: Theoretical Debate*

Table of Content

2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Feminism	23
2.2.1 Definition.....	24
2.2.2 Waves of Feminism.....	25
2.3 Psychoanalytic Feminism.....	27
2.3.1 Definition.....	28
2.3.2 Psychoanalytic Feminism critique.....	30
2.4 Self-assertiveness	31
2.4.1 Definition.....	31
2.4.2 Types of Assertiveness	33
2.5 Conclusion.....	34

2.1 Introduction

Literature has always had the upper hand in depicting man's reality; a reality tainted by everything from the most cherished moments in life to the most dreadful psychological nightmares. Guzel Yakhina, one of the prominent Russian contemporary figures, introduced her debut novel *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* as a historical masterpiece. The novel follows the lives of a number of characters, including Zuleikha, the Tatar protagonist, as they struggle to survive in exile between 1930 and 1946. *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* serves as a portrayal of the psychological struggles imbedded in the protagonist's psyche. These conflicts are intertwined with oppression, subjugation, exile and identity crisis during the dekulakization¹. A variety of controversial issues is explored in Yakhina's work, including the theme of self-assertiveness, which the researcher focuses on in this chapter. A theoretical debate on Self-assertiveness and other related concepts including Feminism and psychoanalytic Feminism is addressed in length in order to provide a theoretical framework for the understudied topic.

2.2 Feminism

Coming from different backgrounds and cultures, and communities has shaped one's gender. The traditional communities regard males as superior whereas women as inferior. Consequently, feminist theory aims at struggling for women' rights and freedom in the realms of politics, social equality, economics, and literature. Feminism arose from women's dissatisfaction with being subservient to everything; feminism allows women to express themselves. Women are no longer considered fatal beings or creatures in men's thoughts.

¹ A Soviet campaign of political repression that included the arrest, exile, or execution of millions of kulaks (wealthy peasants) and their families during the first five-year plan, from 1929 to 1932. The Soviet authorities presented kulaks as class enemies of the USSR in order to assist the confiscation of farmland.

2.2.1 Definition

Once the field of literature is concerned, feminist criticism, according to Elaine Showalter, relates to reinterpretations and inferences present in the content of novels. It is concerned not only with depictions of women and men in fiction, but rather with their relations, portrayals of the institutions that affect them, and the way society molds them. Otherwise stated, Showalter claims that feminist criticism entails a critical examination of the world's superficial view, the people who occupy it, and the sort of reality depicted. Men's control over women's economic position and notions such as women's poverty, women's fear of poverty, women's access to employment, women's education, and other issues are among the studied subjects (Talbot 146).

Feminist theory is concerned with two mainstreams. The first is how women are depicted in male-authored literature, with the language used to describe women and their role in society. The second examines how women are portrayed in female literature, as well as their language used to describe women and their social position. Elaine Showalter coined the term "phallogentrism" to define men's writings about women, whereas "gynocriticism" refers to feminist criticism established by women (Selden 521). Showalter helped in the separation of artificiality within literary analysis whilst dealing with feminism by querying the criteria by which the novels were classified (Phallogentrism or Gynocriticism).

Kate Millett, an American feminist critic and a well-known personality from the second wave of feminism, is another prominent figure. Feminists, according to Millet, must be pluralists in the sense that they do not embrace a radical stance. This implies they accept a variety of perspectives, including feminist ones, even if they are tainted by the patriarchal ideology. Millet, for instance, claims that certain female feminists adopted concepts developed by men. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, was affected by male-dominated ideals of the French revolution (Ben Hmeida 16).

Consequently, feminists should not ignore how certain men, such as John Stuart Mill, made attempts to comprehend the status of women, merely because they were liberals. Hence, the importance of feminist ideas lies not in their origins, whether male or female, but in their application and the results they have. In sum, whether a theory is established by a man or a woman, Millet adds, "its effects can be characterized as sexist or feminist in a given situation" (Toril 119). In The objective lies the significance, regardless of the nature of the method, as long as both (men and women) promote equality and oppose sexism.

2.2.2 Waves of Feminism

Feminism is divided into three stages, according to feminist theorists and researchers. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the first feminist wave emerged. The second wave extended from the 1960s to the 1970s, whereas the third wave extended from the 1990s to the present (Krolokke 1). Nevertheless, depending on the shift, which occurs once this movement reaches the political surface, each of these phases has distinct aims, debates, and political approaches.

Many 19th century female activists, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Margaret Fuller, Sojourner Truth, and Emma Willard, promoted equality perception and self-development, and encouraged their sisters' non-conformity (Martin 15). The turn of the century also formed the shift in feminism's widespread adoption. Those advocates' perspectives altered as well, from their initial purpose of women's suffrage to a more elaborated ideology. Crucially, the new feminist language emerged to set an end to the last vestiges of the movement's old worldview (128). As a result, a new modernized program accompanied the new goal.

Mary Wollstonecraft's works are considered among the most prominent early feminist writings. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft is not so much a

pivotal document in the early feminist movement, yet it is regarded as a philosophically significant paradigm of women's awareness. Nevertheless, towards the turn of the nineteenth century, a further powerful voice arose. Virginia Woolf, a British writer whose work is admired by feminists, was this voice (Ben Hmeida 20).

Woolf claimed that since women lacked history, the latter is dependant on what males write on their behalf in order to transfer it to other males: "these colourful constructive events of their male history through a male lineage," but women are submissive because they embrace such fact (Spender 1). Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, was a fundamental corpus of feminism that provided the framework for the radical second wave feminism, alongside Mary Wollstonecraft's and Virginia Woolf's representations of liberal first wave feminism (Krolokke 6). Only in the 1960s movements did the notion or concept of feminism become associated with certain types of radical resistance, signaling the emergence of the second wave.

The second movement's goal was to improve women's legal and social positions, although it started out as a radical movement. Feminist activists demanded radical social, cultural, and political demands throughout this time (Krolokke 8). One of these feminist groups, for example, was the New York Radical Feminists, who attacked patriarchal cultures' archetypal portrayals of women in 1969. Women were viewed as cattle, according to the demonstrators, and their beauty was more important than what they would do, what they could think. Feminists made their statement loud and clear by carrying banners and signs that stated, "Cattle parades are degrading to human beings." Women were exploited and subjugated by patriarchal forces, and "beauty culture" marketed and oppressed them (Krolokke 8). Feminists may pass on the spirit of liberation to future generations through these protests.

The second wave feminism's identity was defined by rise of other subsidiary criticisms including black, social, and lesbian feminism, and otherwise introduced by the innovative works such as *Bell Hooks' Ain't I A Woman? Black Woman and Feminism* (1981), Trinh T. Minh-ha's work *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*(1989), which questioned the goals of white, middle-class, and heterosexual programs, while also gender, class, colour, ethnicity, and sexuality. The phase included the coining of a new language for the feminist activity such as “Gynocriticism” introduced by Elaine Showalter, and “Womanism” by Alice Walker (Krolokke 13). Second-wave feminisms have created a significant amount of study and teaching on women's concerns since the 1970s.

The start of the Third Wave was in the early 1990s. Primarily, it is distinguished for its clearly defined women's movement ideals. Second, it was a reaction to the setbacks, which second wave feminism failed to recognize. Lipstick feminism, girly feminism, riot grrl feminism, cybergrrl feminism, transfeminism, or plain grrl feminism are examples of criticisms created with the advantages first and second wave women battled for. The term "Grrl" is frequently used to refer to a young woman who is considered independent, assertive, or combative. It was first used in the 1990s to portray the sound of roaring, and hence human rage. Capable, powerful, and forceful social agents is how third-wave feminists describe themselves (Krolokke 15). Furthermore, they are excessively concerned with the urge to establish a feminist theory and its political inclination, although it is an attempt to bridge the gap of divergent viewpoints.

2.3 Psychoanalytic Feminism

Psychoanalytic feminism indicates that women’s oppression is based on psychological structures, maintained by the constant repeating or reiteration of relationship dynamics created in childhood. Psychoanalytic feminists intended to change early childhood and family relationships, as well as language patterns that develop and perpetuate masculinity and

femininity, because of such deeply rooted patterns. Psychoanalytic feminists explored political and social issues affecting the development of male and female subjects, challenging Freudian and Neo-Freudian ideas of women as physiologically, morally, and psychologically inferior to men. Like radical feminists, they are considered sexual difference and women's otherness as regarded to males as major concerns.

2.3.1 Definition

Kristina Wolff in her article *Psychoanalytic Feminism* (2007) defines psychoanalytic feminism as an oppression theory that claims men have an innate psychological urge to oppress women. Men's urge to dominate women and women's little resistance to servitude have their origins in the human mind. In order to better comprehend and alter women's oppression, this branch of feminism tries to acquire understanding into how our psychological lives grow. The oppressive pattern is also embedded in society, resulting in patriarchy's formation and implementation. It is possible to restructure socialization processes in the early phases of human existence by using psychoanalytic approaches to investigate distinctions between men and women, as well as the manner in which gender is produced.

Discovering the cause of dominance in men's psyche and subjugation in women's, which is largely overlooked in individuals' unconscious, can lead to societal reform, or a "cure" can be formed by identifying the root of dominance in men's psyche and submission in women's psyches, which is generally overlooked in people's unconscious. This branch of feminism arose from cultural feminism, which looks at the distinctions between men and women in order to understand women's roles in society. Psychoanalytic feminists study how gender is produced and practiced on social, familial, and individual levels. Identity development and gender roles, particularly expectations surrounding what is labeled "feminine" and "masculine," by studying how conscious parts of personality grow throughout

the earliest stages of life. The underlying framework for this body of feminism is provided by Freud's views of the human psyche, including psychosexual development, as well as Lacan's rethinking of Freud's beliefs (Wolff).

Psychoanalytic feminism looks at a number of issues surrounding gender in society, with a focus on why males continue to oppress women. There are two primary sections. One branch looks into the distinctions between men and women on a micro level, focusing on women's psychology and the setting in which a child's personality evolves. This encompasses early sexuality features, childhood learning and development, and parent-child interaction. It also looks at how femininity and masculinity are established, as well as the link between identity and personality.

The investigation of gender construction is the focus of the other branch. Examining masculinity, femininity, the evolution of adult sexuality, including the awareness of female libido, and the perpetuation of patriarchy are all part of this (Benjamin, Irigaray, Kristeva, Mitchell). While this portion continues to use psychoanalytic approaches on a micro level, it also employs macro-level analysis by looking at societal structures such as the economy and employment, science and knowledge, the arts, and language. The first branch, from a psychoanalytic standpoint, reflects man's urge for an heir, to produce something that would outlast him. Primarily due to his dread of mortality, while also offering the possibility of dominance over women and his children. The second branch, from a psychoanalytic standpoint, represents man's need for permanence, such as through the establishment of business, wealth, science, art, and architecture (Wolff). These wider social structures and mechanisms organize society, resulting in a patriarchal system that oppresses and dominates women.

In both branches of psychoanalytic feminism, the analysis of women's roles as mothers and daughters is a prominent theme. Mothering, according to early theorists like

Jessica Benjamin, Jane Flax, Dorothy Dinnerstein, and Nancy Chodorow, is a way of recognizing the status quo's continuous reproduction and creation, and hence a location where social change might occur. Many psychoanalytic feminists explore people's pre-Oedipal and Oedipal experiences in connection to gender and identity development, using Freud's methodologies as beginning points for analysis. Children develop gender roles during these periods, which last from birth through their third year. Children's gender knowledge develops because of their natural propensity to identify with their same-sex parent, according to Freud. Several psychoanalytic feminists agree with the concept, looking at gender development in both boys and girls during the Oedipal and pre-Oedipal stages (Wolff).

2.3.2 Psychoanalytic Feminism critique

There have been criticisms of psychoanalytic feminism and its scholars' approaches. Because of the emphasis on early human development, the limited options for bringing about change are mostly focused on this time and rely on individuals raising their children in various ways. The theories that underpin a significant portion of this body of feminism are based on Freud and Lacan's work. While this classic body of research is essential in the way that it shows how men and women may attain masculinity and femininity, and that women possess sexual desires and wants (Wolff). Many of these theories are sexist and place males in superior positions to women.

Some argue if psychoanalytic feminism should be based on theories developed by males, especially as they are frequently promoted as "truth claims" and "treatment" for individuals who are subjects to psychoanalysis. Furthermore, psychological theory understood the feminine experience primarily in terms of masculinity, which is one of psychoanalysis feminism's criticism of science and knowledge. While there is recognition of the need to modify dualistic thinking, by anchoring the investigation of women's subjugation through

gender differences, the either/or split which psychoanalytic feminism is challenging is nevertheless reified. Women are thought to naturally desire to produce and raise children, whereas males are thought to be satisfied being physically and emotionally separated from their families (Wolff). There is no way to account for gender ambiguity or the fact that sexuality and sexual variations are not always linked to gender. There is no other sexuality but heterosexuality within this sort of feminism.

Other beliefs about race/ethnicity, class, nation status, aptitude, and other factors that influence family structure, childhood, and parenting are usually ignored and overlooked. Furthermore, by focusing reform solely on people, whether in the sphere of parenting or in the arena of knowledge creation, broader social structures and processes that originate, generate, and reproduce injustice persist unabated. Within psychoanalytic feminism, there are scholars who are actively striving to respond to these criticisms and thereby develop this corpus of feminism (Wolff). This involves incorporating more flexible, ambiguous, and broader gender ideas. Understandings of gender, particularly "female," are no longer defined in connection to and from what is "male" because of the absorption of postmodernist viewpoints.

2.4 Self-assertiveness

The ability to argue for oneself - one's own viewpoints, to achieve one's goals, to overcome obstacles, to be resolute without jeopardizing others' rights, and to manage violent impulses are all crucial human qualities. "Assertiveness" is a term that conveys these personal attributes. Assertiveness is a quality that may be developed. It is a requirement for self-realization.

2.4.1 Definition

Because of its relationship to good personality adjustment in Western cultures,

assertiveness has received much interest in the research literature and has developed into a desirable therapeutic aim (Hamid, 1994). Although there are several definitions in the research literature, assertiveness has been defined as standing up for one's own rights and communicating ideas, emotions, and beliefs in a genuine, plain, and acceptable manner without infringing on the rights of others (Kirst 1).

Alberti and Emmons (1970) went on to say that, assertive people might act in their own greatest advantage without extreme anxiety or disrespecting the interests of others. Non-assertiveness, on the other hand, is defined as articulating one's thoughts and feelings in an overly apologetic, hesitant, and self-deprecating manner that others often overlook or discard them (Kirst 1). Assertiveness therefore provides a middle ground between aggressiveness and submissiveness, promotes self-esteem, respect for others, and collaboration.

Researchers have highlighted emotional and cognitive components of assertiveness in order to offer a more precise explanation of the complicated term. Anxiety can impede the expression of assertive reactions at the interpersonal level. Shy people, according to, typically suffer from inhibitory anxiety, which inhibits them from acting assertively. Lack of assertiveness might be impacted by self-depreciation on a cognitive level (Kirst 1).

Because they consider others' views, opinions, and rights to be more important than their own, people with a low sense of self-esteem may find it difficult to speak up for themselves. According to Vagos and Pereira (2010), a cognitive filter that affects how an individual receives social cues influences assertive and non-assertive actions (Kirst 2). Core beliefs, which are formed through early interactions with attachment figures and impact how we understand ourselves, others, and the relationships between them, drive our cognitive assessments of social situations.

2.4.2 Types of Assertiveness

In unique circumstance, people respond to one other in a variety of ways. Non-assertiveness, assertiveness, and aggressiveness are three of these approaches, according to Alberti and Emmons (1975). Non-assertive replies entail presenting oneself in such a self-effacing, apologetic attitude that one's own views, feelings, and rights are easily overlooked. This person pauses, talks quietly, looks away, fidgets uneasily, avoids issues, agrees regardless of his own sentiments, does not voice ideas, values himself lower than others, lacks confidence, and harms himself to avoid upsetting others. The goal is to please people and avoid disagreement at all costs (Sert 43).

Assertive responses entail standing up for one's own self, while also considering the other person. Answering spontaneously, communicating in a conversational yet strict tone and volume, confronting the other person with looks, presenting the main issue, freely expressing personal thoughts and opinions, appreciating oneself equally to others, and hurting neither one's own self nor others are all characteristics of the assertive style. The goal is to guarantee that everyone is treated equally (Sert 43).

Threatening or infringing on the other person's rights are examples of aggressive responses. In this case, the individual speaks before the other person has completed speaking, speaks loudly and abusively, gazes at the other person, prioritizes one's self above others, and harms others to avoid hurting himself. The goal is to win regardless of who the opponent is (Sert 43). Aggression and assertiveness are frequently confounded, although the two are fundamentally distinct. Assertiveness is all about being honest with our feelings, whether positive and negative. The difference between aggression and assertiveness is that assertiveness is a positive, deliberate, goal-directed activity that fulfils the beneficial function of self-protection and does not involve any desire to damage.

2.5 Conclusion

Because of its impact on people's psychological and social well-being, self-assertiveness has become the subject of a number of academic research. The topic is addressed on a psychological level to describe the metamorphosis of a woman in Yakhina's novel *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. Self-assertiveness serves as a theme of interest in the contemporary Russian writings as it reveals the psychological reformation of identity experienced by the oppressed and subjugated women. In the next chapter, the researcher applies the methodologies and notions discussed in chapter two to examine the issue of self-assertiveness in Guzel Yakhina's work.

Chapter Three: Zuleikha Opens her Eyes: A Journey

Fulfilled

Table of Contents

3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 The Silenced	37
3.3 Transgressing Conventions	42
3.4 Forging New Path in Life	45
3.5 Conclusion.....	49

3.1 Introduction

Zuleikha Opens her Eyes' power stems mostly from the author's depiction of the Russian women's emotional assessment of their struggles, and challenges towards emancipation and claiming freedom. Yakhina's literary skill is used to investigate the experiences of the silenced. She emphasizes the shift, which her characters undergo throughout their evolutions. *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is a novel about a metamorphosis, claiming existential rights, and giving the voice to the voiceless while surrounded by psychological, political, social and patriarchal injustices.

The following chapter is an analysis of the evolution the protagonist of *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* achieved. It underlines three major steps by which the protagonist fulfilled her journey to self-assertiveness. The first part entitled: "The Silenced" examines the main character as being silenced under the oppression of her husband and her mother-in-law, alongside the exploration of her psyche to investigate the reason of her trauma and submissive conduct. The second part entitled: "Transgressing Conventions", explores how the protagonist break free from conventional, religious, and patriarchal constraints by adopting an androgyny as a trait while maintaining feminine features. The last part as entitled: "Forging a New Path in Life" analyses how Zuleikha adapts to lively injustices in order to make her way through life towards self-assertiveness.

3.2 The Silenced

At the beginning of her journey, Zuleikha, the protagonist is depicted by Guzel Yakhina as the silenced. She cannot speak out her mind nor has the permission to do so. The only way to communicate her thoughts and emotion is by repressing them inside. The repressive atmosphere in which Zuleikha lives is confined by her silence at the start of the narrative and afterward. Murtaza, *Ubyrly Karchyk* (the Vampire Hag, referring to Zuleikha's

mother in law), and the customs of a rural community and family mute her. In the beginning, her silence is that of a submissive woman, a show of her inferiority to Murtaza (Shvyrkov 46).

Even though Zuleikha's silence was imposed, it is often interpreted by her mother in law as a sign of vulnerability and inability to influence power: "you're silent," the old woman utters in condemnation, ... "you're always silent, mute. If I had to live with someone who was silent all the time, I'd kill them" (Yakhina 27). As Zuleikha's silence marked her weakness and inferiority, the only time which it made her as equal to her husband Murtaza was his everlasting silence, his death (Shvyrkov 46): "And still they lay there, shoulder to shoulder, their wide-open eyes looking at the ceiling, which was first dark, then thickly flooded with white moonlight, then dark again. For the first time, Murtaza didn't send her off to the women's quarters. That was utterly surprising" (Yakhina 58).

To convey the purpose by which the protagonist was able to break the silence through the narrative, Yakhina at first entailed the internal monologue: "All-powerful Allah, may what has been envisioned be fulfilled. May nobody awaken" (Yakhina 7). "Go on, Zuleikha, you pitiful hen, hurry up" (9). Alongside the omniscient narrator. However, the internal monologue transcends to become unilateral dialogues and are addressed by no one: "Is it much further, Murtaza? I can't see Sandugach through the trees anymore. "Her husband doesn't answer" (14). "Let's go home, Murtaza; it's getting stormy again." Her husband doesn't answer" (15).

Zuleikha's character development can be traced back to the moments when she "opens her eyes," which represent points of growth. When she initially opens her eyes, it is stated as follows: "Zuleikha opens her eyes. It's as dark as a cellar" (6). The darkness represents the inability to see, blindness, and subjugation as a part of the traditional community. She is uneducated (Shvyrkov 48): "Zuleikha can't read, especially in Russian" (46). She views the

world through a religious and mythical lens: “What do you think?” Zuleikha lowers her voice. “Are there places on earth that Allah’s gaze doesn’t reach?” (15), she asks her husband when they make their way out of the *Urman* (the forest).

Zuleikha’s exposure and embracement of the silence is the aftermath of her simple, gullible and naive nature. The projection of these characteristics is noticed through the novel in the way she believes in the superstitious. Specters and spirits play an important role in her worldview. To her assumptions, the spirits are surrounding *Yulbash* (her village):

The home of the basu kapka iyase: the edge-of-town spirit ... That’s his line of work – sitting with his nose toward a field and his tail toward Yulbash, chasing evil spirits away from the village, not allowing them beyond the edge of town. He’s the intermediary for helping villagers who have requests for the forest spirits. It’s serious work so he has no time for merriment (18).

Zuleikha would expose herself to scolding by her mother in law or her husband in order to please a spirit. For her, the amusement of the spirits is a goal to which she could receive their help when she needed and so as not to be rejected: “I’m sorry to disturb you so often,” she says into the blizzard. “If you could just help me once again? Please don’t refuse me.” It’s no easy matter to please a spirit” (19).

In Zuleikha's case, the silence speaks in terms of internal dialogues and ideas, but her silence also expresses her oppression and subjugation. From a sadistic, bully mother in-law, the protagonist have endured all kinds of insults: “You turned up, you pitiful hen,” her mother-in-law grumbles. “All you know how to do is sleep, you lazybones” (Yakhina 11). “You could never do anything like that,” she continues. “You can’t hit or kill or learn to love ... No, you’ll never really live. In short, you’re a hen and your life is hennish.”(27) Often, the insults extend to death threats: “You’ll die soon” (27). “You’re always silent, mute. If I had to

live with someone who was silent all the time, I'd kill them" (27). Perhaps the cruelest insult Zuleikha had received was that about her inability to bear children: "Of course maybe there was honey smeared between your legs in your youth but then again that spot didn't exactly flourish, now, did it? You only brought girls into the world and not one of them survived" (22).

From a bully mother in-law, to an oppressive husband, Zuleikha has experienced all kind of domestic violence: verbal abuse, beating, and even rape from Murtaza, he represents the image typical Tatar husband: Strong, violent, and pays no significance to his wife. He considers Zuleikha as less and inferior that she is not called by her name; rather, she is referred to as "woman": "You lost your mind, woman?"(Yakhina 11), "You here, woman?" (20). Likewise, Zuleikha has no right to share the bed with her husband: "Sets a place for Murtaza at the wide sleeping bench, tossing some food on it. Runs to the winter shed and rekindles the stove there ... Finally, she can go to her area behind the stove" (19-20). She is often beaten by Murtaza as a kind of frustration release: "Lie still, woman," he says. And he begins beating her. A broom on the back isn't painful ... Zuleikha lies still, as her husband ordered, but she shudders and scratches the shelf with her nails at each strike so he doesn't beat her long" (29).

From a psychoanalytic feminist perspective, Kristina Wolff argues that: "men have an inherent psychological need to subjugate women. The root of men's compulsion to dominate women and women's minimal resistance to subjugation lies deep within the human psyche."(Wolff). The theory; however, explains Murtaza's thirst for oppression and Zuleikha's openness to submissiveness and subjugation. On the other hand, Lynne Attwood claims that husband-wife owner-property relationships were a distinctive feature of the so-called "women of the East," who were "treated as chattels rather than human beings" (Attwood 75), Zuleikha is literally enslaved and abused on both the mental and the physical

level: “Murtaza is standing in the doorway in just his underclothes; he’s holding the same broom in his hand. He takes a step forward and closes the door behind him ...And he begins beating her ... She was given a good husband after all” (29).

Attwood adds: “They began life as the property of their fathers until they were sold off for bride price to new masters ... Even when her husband died, a woman did not gain her freedom” (Attwood 75). Indeed, even after her husband’s death, Zuleikha is unable to make independent decisions: “Murtaza used foresight on everything: he’s already headed off to his forefathers, but his thoughts are still directing his loyal wife” (Yakhina 103). Her behaviours are still directed by the omnipresent super-ego that her husband shaped. Zuleikha's family is to blame for her incapacity to make decisions on her own. Murtaza and her mother in-law molded her thinking and defined her behaviour by disciplining her body (Shvyrkov 49).

From a psychological perspective, the accumulation of the feelings and emotions generated by bullying, verbal abuse, beating, and rape can lead to a psychological trauma. In the case of Zuleikha, it is noticed through the novel in the way she is referring to herself by what she was called by: “Go on, Zuleikha, you pitiful hen, hurry up. It was the Vampire Hag who first called her zhebegyan tavyk – pitiful hen. Zuleikha started calling herself this after a while, too, without even noticing” (9). “The rolled-up pastila prevents her from moving quickly. She truly is a pitiful hen now” (10). Her trauma extends to the state of denial generated by the violence she had received from her husband. According to her, and despite all what she has went through, her belief in which she has been granted a good husband is unshakable: “Murtaza is a good master of the house. And a good husband” (7), “And he begins beating her. A broom on the back isn’t painful ... He cools off quickly. She was given a good husband after all” (29).

3.3 Transgressing Conventions

Zuleikha Opens her Eyes, as depicted by Guzel Yakhina is “a novel about a woman who acquires new strength. It’s a novel about the metamorphosis of a woman” (qtd. in Amos). Yakhina portrays the radical transformation of the protagonist from the plain Tatar villager, submissive to her husband, to the single mother shaping her own future and that of her son’s, drawing the picture of the woman who defies repressive social norms and conventions, which were imposed on her before, and during the metamorphosis she underwent.

Zuleikha’s transformation is traced back by the moment she sheds her former self to adapt with her new self and the environment she has recently joined. Zuleikha’s new self has no tolerance to what had been appropriate and inappropriate. What the norms and conventions thrust for generations, for her old self and circumstances had underwent a drastic change and so is she: “She pulls the shawl from her head and lays it between her leg and Leibe’s bony hip; it’s sinful to sit so close to an unrelated man. It’s even shameful for the forefathers three generations away, as her mother would have reproachfully said” (Yakhina 125). The protagonist’s realization of what have once been necessary and crucial is now of vain: “Yes, Mama, I know. But your rules were only good for the old life. And we have – what was it Ignatov said? – a new life. Oh, what a life we have now” (125).

The protagonist’s act of transgressing conventions extends to religion. To some extent, Zuleikha’s religious enthusiasm subsides by the time she is a member of the settlement. To her beliefs recently, Allah’s omniscient gaze which encompassed the earth: “Are there places on earth that Allah’s gaze doesn’t reach?” (15), does not reach the part of the world, which she has recently joined: “She has started praying faster and more infrequently, as if in passing ... What if He turned his stern gaze away from the exiles for a little while and then lost them

on the boundless expanses of the taiga?" (217), "She prays rarely and in haste" (254), "She became convinced during the recent starvation that Allah neither saw nor heard them, because if the Almighty had heard even one of the thousand tearful prayers that Zuleikha had dispatched to Him during that harsh winter, he would not have left her and Yuzuf bereft of His kindly care" (254).

Yakhina's depiction of Zuleikha through the last part of the novel endows her with male traits to enhance the image of the strong, self-reliant protagonist. As a part of the new labour camp, Zuleikha's character urged an Androgyny in order to adapt: "She recently and suddenly grasped that it's good that fate has cast her here ... hunting like a man, working enough for three, and she's doing fine" (299). "Zuleikha slings her rifle on her back as she comes right up to Gorelov. She crouches, with her knees spread apart like a man, picks up the lifeless lump, puts its little head in a loop of rope, and hangs it on her belt" (337). When Zuleikha joins the hunting artel, she is androgenizing roles; she is working along male hunters as belonging among them. With no consciousness to gender, Zuleikha is actively engaged in the hunting process, this, however; reflects Zuleikha's status as equal to other male hunters.

Nevertheless, by the androgyny of roles, Yakhina in the novel extends the role of Zuleikha beyond the traditional view of the patriarchal norms, which stereotypes and restricts the role of woman to homemakers, caregivers, child-bearers, and passive political violence victims. On the other hand, Yakhina's protagonist manages to redefine and reconstitute her identity by which the embracement of masculine traits does not distort the femininity within. Her feminine essence does not destroy the masculine principle, does not destroy those who surround her, but on the contrary, it dissolves in them, taking on an unbearable load. Feminine, in full agreement with her, initially a real woman with a creative function, Zuleikha tries to see the spiritual principle in everything, proclaiming humanity in inhuman conditions.

The reflection of Zuleikha's image through the settlement's male point of view had

underwent a different perspective from the beginning of the novel to the end. To Ignatov, the Red Army man, Zuleikha has been the vulnerable, small Tatar woman: “Ignatov turns around. The small Tatar woman is standing sideways” (146); however, by time, Ignatov concludes to admit her power of will to survival: “But what do you know – she survived ... But this one’s alive. Not only that, she’s carrying a child. What is her soul holding onto?” (163). To Gorelov, Zuleikha, the quite, the obedient, is by means the complete opposite: “She’s a viper. Who would have thought? She looks so quiet” (336). In his mural, Ikkonikov depicts Zuleikha as an angel, a representation of the Soviet Woman: “The mother with the baby is for all Soviet women” (321). To the hunting artel comrades, Zuleikha had grown to be a source of envy due to her hunting skills: “A rifle, heavy and cold, nestles into her back; it will spring into her hands on its own if necessary, stretch toward the target, and never miss. “You cast a spell on it or something?” the others in the artel ask, half-joking, half-envious” (298). The picture of Zuleikha drawn by the settlement’s figures of patriarchy was the outcome of the struggles the protagonist overcame. Her achievements are at last recognized and valued.

Guzel Yakhina views Zuleikha as a protagonist that embraced feminist prospective, for her, Zuleikha’s story is: “about a woman who acquires new strength. It’s a novel about the metamorphosis of a woman. You can call it feminist, be my guest” (qtd. in Amos). Western reviewers may object to labelling Zuleikha a feminist work since she frequently considers her own identity in relation to the males in her life. She is possibly most self-aware when she recognizes her talent for marksmanship and falls in love with Ignatov, but she eventually gives in to the pressures of motherhood, the novel explores the conflict between Zuleikha's growing self-awareness, and her obligations to others is most intriguing. Such kind of feminism is distinct; one that prioritizes the relational self above the demands of radical individualism, and one that seems more in line with both Russian and Tatar culture (Solomon).

3.4 Forging New Path in Life

Guzel Yakhina's masterpiece *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is the tale of a paradox; the story of a woman who have made her way through her emancipation. While home is the alleged place to be free, Zuleikha finds her freedom in the labour camp where she is imprisoned. Zuleikha is first a representation as a dependent, submissive woman who is mistreated by her husband and the society. *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is built upon the prototype of Yakhina's Tatar grandmother, who has been dekulakized and exiled; however, in the midst of the nowhere, she finds the true essence of herself. All the sincerity and spontaneity available falls on the plot: the road to the place of exile, survival in Siberia (robinsonade), dispossessing insecurity, fear and finding one's own in the internal dynamics of the image. *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is the tale of a woman's journey to self-assertiveness, redefining identity and forgings a new path.

The novel first begins with Zuleikha opening her eyes: "Zuleikha opens her eyes. It's as dark as a cellar" (Yakhina 7). It is a metaphor portraying the darkness surrounding her first life; a life haunted by fate injustices, domestic violence, patriarchy, and trauma. However, it also a metaphor of Zuleikha's opening to the world, breaking all the constraints that were once hindering her from belonging to different places all at once, from rising with herself to becoming the self-assertive woman making her own path through physical and mental emancipation. The narrative is certain about its protagonist's ability to redeem herself.

Zuleikha does not need to talk; she finds atonement by learning to view the world clearly and becoming deserving of a utopian society at the end of the line, rather than by conveying her trauma. Every time Zuleikha "opens her eyes" (a motif that appears throughout the novel), she is confronted with a new settings, ranging from the terrifying to the simply challenging. Zuleikha must be worthy of *sobornost* (spiritual gathering and community) in

order to escape the violence of *byt* (the everyday) and reach the utopia of the settlement, and she wins this privilege by being morally spotless. She is an unmistakably decent girl, hardworking and humble, oriented towards the community (Sadovina 74).

Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* was released in 2015, synchronizing with the publishing of multiple Russian works including: A. Varlamov "The Mental Wolf", A. Gelasimov "Cold", V. Dakhnov "Lullaby", A. Ganieva "The Bride and Groom", A. Snegirev "Vera", T. Moskvina "The Life of a Soviet Girl", and R. Senchin "Flooding Zone". The protagonists of the works mentioned perish due to the struggle of the inability to cope up with life (Zhuchkova 573); these texts are metaphors of death, the protagonists' journeys started with indulging in the favours of life, and ended with the recurrent desire of death.

Zuleikha's journey; however, begins with sufferings and struggles, yet ends with embracing life. It is undeniable that the protagonist yearns for death multiple times throughout the narrative: "She thought she was seeing life. It would later turn out she was seeing death" (Yakhina 106) "And Allah, when will my journey end? Could You break it with a supreme gesture? ... Zuleikha has been carrying a longed-for death in her pocket ... What is this if not the answer to her ardent prayer?" (Yakhina 151). For her, death fills all the dimensions of her life: "Even the grain that she and her husband buried between their daughters' graves – with the hope of saving it for their new crop – will rot in spring and become death's quarry" (Yakhina 106).

However, amid all this decadence, the little Tatar woman Zuleikha decides to open her eyes, to overcome obedience to thoughts about death, which haunted her like a ghost, and rather embrace life: "Zuleikha knows that spring will come, the trees will burst with young greener. To the contrary: she feels herself part of a big and strong world, like a drop in an evergreen sea" (298-299). Yet she has come to the realization that life and death are

inseparable, in order to survive, one must exist with the joys of life, simultaneously transcend the horrors of death: “Death is everywhere here but death is simple, understandable, and wise, even just in its own way ... Death is tightly, seamlessly interwoven with life, so it’s not scary” (298).

Zuleikha’s journey entitles her to achieve new goals, overcome her past fears and undergo new experiences. It is only in her journey that she experiences motherhood and love. Death has interrupted her motherhood through claiming her four daughters, her fear of motherhood becomes apparent in the way her daughters’ death haunted her, in the way she recalls her daughters’ names like a mantra: “She remembers how she grieved over her first daughter, who was granted one whole month of life ... Shamsia-Firuza, the wheels clack. Khalida-Sabida. And again: Shamsia-Firuza, Khalida-Sabida” (Yakhina 150).

Zuleikha finally finds joy of motherhood precisely during her stay in the settlement, only then she becomes free from her fears associated with children. Yuzuf (son of Zuleikha) became the meaning of life for the main character. Motherhood endows her with strength to forge her path in life: “She knows that if her son’s life is interrupted, then her heart will instantly stop, too. This knowledge sustains her, filling her with strength and some sort of unfamiliar courage” (216).

Love, on the other hand, is another tenet on which the protagonist grows a sense of power. Zuleikha’s romantic affair with Ignatov, the Red Army man, permits her to experience what she did not experience with her deceased husband Murtaza, which is love. She often describes her husband as “a good husband”; noticeably, her words express respect for her husband, which is a national trait of the Tatar protagonist, but not love. Her emotions for Ignatov allows her to feel sexually emancipated, a feeling she did not know previously: “The plowman comes to till when he desires and tills while he has the strength. It does not befit the

land to defy its tiller.” And she did not defy ... not knowing it could be otherwise. Now she knows” (Yakhina 332). However, her sexual emancipation is the outcome of years of modesty and monogamous restraints. Even as she develops a sense of self, Zuleikha never becomes selfish. She quits her romantic relationship with Ignatov the minute her responsibilities as a mother appear to be in jeopardy. What is significant is that she continues to be self-sacrificing (Sadovina 75).

Throughout the novel, the protagonist’s indifference to her former self marks her journey to self-assertiveness. Zuleikha at the beginning of the novel appears as a vulnerable, superstitious, Tatar woman; the image of the silenced, the downtrodden, depressed by her daughter’s death. However, her shift is remarkable, as she becomes the self-reliant, independent, strong protagonist gaining confidence and self-awareness, stronger in difficult conditions. Amid her existential evolution, Zuleikha undergoes a transformation, thanks to which spiritual changes take place in her conscience, affecting her life guidelines.

A similar transformation occurs due to the destruction of traditional gender models. For her, life and environment changes dramatically; society loses familiar outlines, turning into a space of her emancipation. The traditional way of life, which has not changed for a Tatar woman in centuries suddenly collapses, forcing her to live among distinguishable realities, where strength replaces her fears and weaknesses. Where emotions give way to a rational thinking and suffering amazingly transforms into the joy of a new worldview and self-assertiveness.

3.5 Conclusion

Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is a representation of all feminine experiences throughout the protagonist Zuleikha, who's character is exposed to a diversity of changes which introduce various struggles in the lives of women for centuries. Ranging from domestic violence, death, Loss, trauma and rape, *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* provides the hope that overcoming such serious life hardships towards a future where ideals as self-assertiveness, love, and motherhood can be achieved.

General Conclusion

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Modern Russian women's writing evokes the debate over contemporary Russia's culture, history, and crucially, destiny. Their current struggle is to discuss the stratification and shift of Russian culture due to historical, social and ethnic diversity, which draws Russian authors to identify within the Russian inter/national level. Russian women writings break their way through by overcoming difficult circumstances, but it is now widely recognized globally, however; it fights valiantly for women's emancipation socially and ideologically. Russian women writers aim at redefining the stereotypical image of the female distorted by patriarchy; since women's literature seeks to grant a voice to the oppressed, which faced endless rejections and is neglected by the patriarchal and political bias that seek to reduce the female status of womanhood to subtle traits of submissiveness, vulnerability, and silence.

Guzel Yakhina, like other female authors, is interested in examining the contradictory viewpoint of tragedy and horror, including the manufactured optimism and aspiration imposed in Russia's recent history, as well as the representation of women's arisal from the embers in such harrowing conditions. Her writings shed light on sensitive historical events that occurred during the Soviet Union's era. Ethnic concerns, identity conflicts, survival motivations, and the rejection of feminine norms are all addressed in this way. Furthermore, contemporary Russian literature strives for a nostalgic return to the past while keeping the current style of the works on display.

Yakhina's writings are not gender-specific, although she is particularly concerned with female characters and their dilemma. She is focused on the larger subject of war, as well as humanity's nature and future. For her, history and culture are impersonal constructions, and the repercussions of those creations can only be valid if they are experienced personally. Yakhina concerns herself with women's drives and desires, which patriarchy expects them to

neglect, and is preoccupied with women's history, which male historians have chosen to ignore in their writings. Her art examines women's cultural expectations, with dynamic female protagonists striving for their identities and fighting against violence as central themes.

Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* is a representation of all feminine experiences throughout the protagonist Zuleikha, who's character is exposed to a diversity of changes which introduce various struggles in the lives of women for centuries. Ranging from domestic violence, death, Loss, trauma and rape, *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes* provides the hope that overcoming such serious life hardships towards a future where ideals as self-assertiveness, love, and motherhood can be achieved. The novel portrays the feminine struggles amid the Soviet Union era; in the center of the dekulakization, collectivization campaign and exile imposed. Where women are double burdened by both patriarchy and political injustices.

In *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*, where the language in which it is written is given to the reader through the Soviet experience, Russian Women literature is particularly relevant. Guzel Yakhina, as a contemporary woman author, writes her work from the perspective of her own life and society. She investigates people's experiences, lost traditions and identities, and Russia's fragmented social and ethnic systems. She also depicts how each character is torn between the past and the present, and their struggles to belonging. Yakhina's plethora of studies establishes a literary legacy that speaks to the quiet voice of women and men.

Because of its impact on people's psychological and social well-being, self-assertiveness becomes the subject of a number of academic research. The topic is addressed on a psychological level to describe the metamorphosis of a woman in Yakhina's novels *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. Self-assertiveness serves as a theme of interest in the contemporary Russian writings as it reveals the psychological reformation of identity experienced by the

oppressed and subjugated women. Guzel Yakhina in her work; however, attempt to portray the female process towards self-recognition, self-awareness, and the quest for identity.

Self-assertiveness have worked on reshaping the psyche of the protagonist Zuleikha from multiple perspectives. In order to overcome the new life challenges, the protagonist have adopts defense mechanisms, which endow her with the proper impetus for survival. Such defense mechanisms include androgyny and transgressing religious and cultural conventions that were imposed on her. Zuleikha's self-assertiveness is the nascent of her mental emancipation; it is only when the protagonist realized self-awareness that she achieves self-fulfillment and is able to assert her existence. Patriarchal norms as well served as a revelation. The protagonist openness to the injustices male figures thwarted on her were proper causes for the process of Zuleikha's metamorphosis from being the vulnerable, submissive, Tatar women to the self-assertive, strong woman; the representation of the "Soviet Woman".

The current study is relevant and useful. It provides an opportunity to consider self-assertiveness in the light Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens her Eyes*. Yakhina examines this psychological conduct (Self-assertiveness) in relation to patriarchy, femininity, gender, history in her novel. Sociology, philosophy, psychology, and religion all have interdisciplinary relationships with self-assertiveness. This study is a reflection of today's reality, focusing on a number of specific psychological confrontations that will encourage additional research into historical context and the examination of moral issues raised by female authors. As the current research achieves the aforementioned conclusions, it is hoped they would be viewed as an attempt to draw attention to comparable situations in Algerian culture. The researcher expects that the findings of this study would be included in future research on subjugated females and their pursuit of self-assertiveness in Algeria

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A: Guzel Yakhina

Figure 1. Demonstrates a picture of the Russian writer Guzel Yakhina



Figure 1. Saget, Joel, “Russian writer Guzel Yakhina faced controversy when her debut book *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes* was published in 2015,” *The Guardian*, 3 May 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/russian-author-defends-gulag-era-story-as-tv-series-provokes-backlash>

Appendix B: Zuleikha Opens her Eyes Book

Figure 2. Shows an image of Yakhina's novel *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes*.

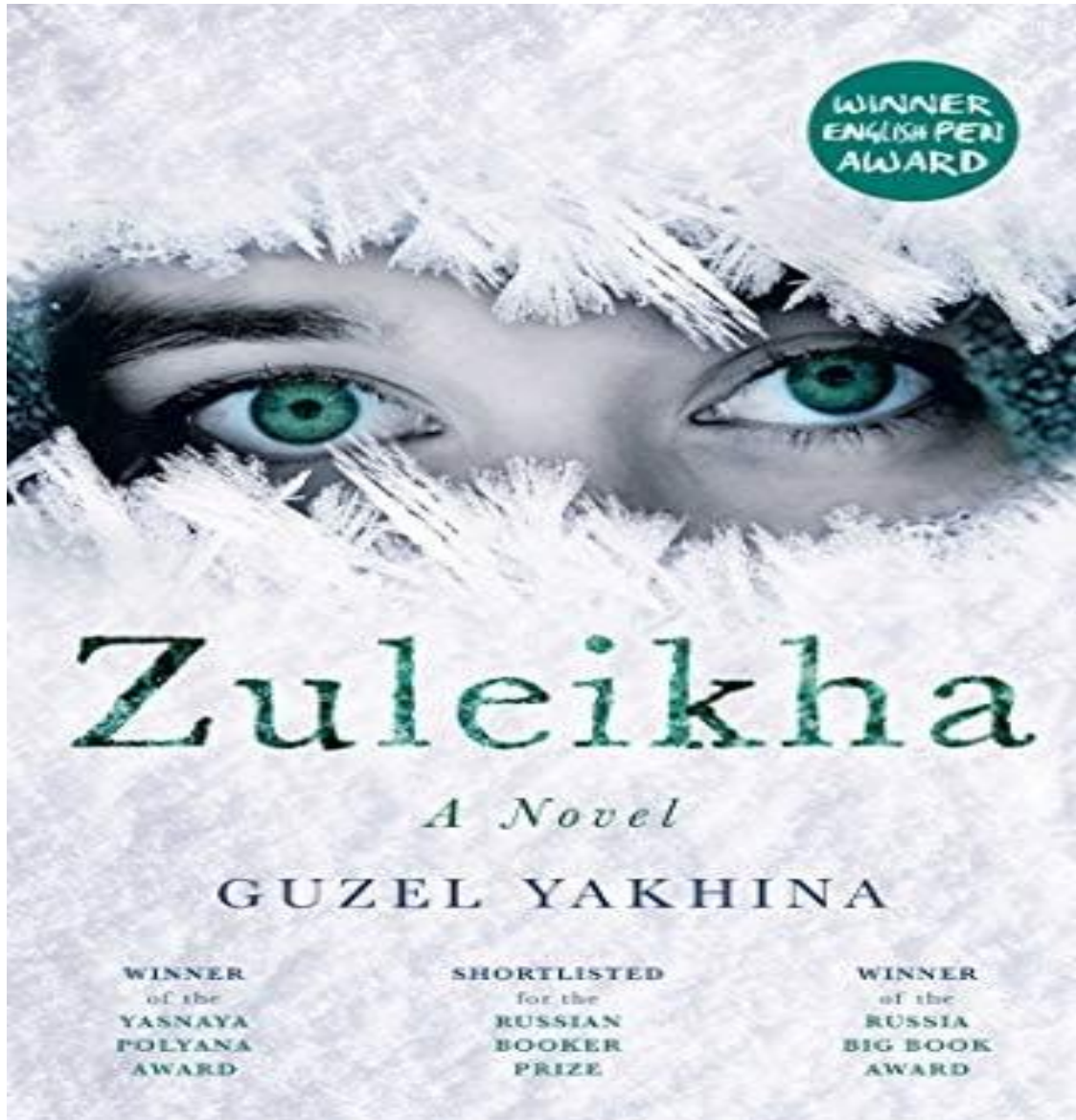


Figure 2. Getty, "Zuleikha Hardcover," Amazon, 7 March 2019,

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Zuleikha-Guzel-Yakhina/dp/1786073498>

Glossary

Glossary

artel. Between the 1860s and the 1950s, numerous cooperative associations termed as artels operated in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. With the state's total monopolization of the economy, the term was finally phased away. Artels formed semi-formal associations for a wide range of enterprises in the past, including fishing, mining, trade, loaders, loggers, robbers, beggars, and so on. Artels frequently worked away from home and lived in a communal setting. Payment for completed work was divided based on verbal agreements, which were frequently in equal shares. Artels were frequently seasonal. They became more formalized over time, with internal hierarchies and legal agreements.

collectivization. A Soviet government policy implemented most aggressively between 1929 and 1933, with the objective of turning traditional agriculture in the Soviet Union and reducing the kulaks' economic power (wealthy peasants). The peasantry were compelled to give up their private farms and join larger collective farms as a result of collectivization (kolkhozy). The process was eventually carried out in tandem with a campaign to rapidly industrialize the Soviet Union. However, before the drive started, the Soviet leaders engaged in prolonged and acrimonious debates about the nature and pace of collectivization, particularly between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky in 1925–27 and Stalin and Nikolay Bukharin in 1927–29.

gulag. An acronym for Glavnoye Upravleniye Ispravitelno-Trudovykh Lagerey (Russian: "Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps"), was a system of Soviet labor camps and associated detainment and transit camps and prisons that accommodated political prisoners and criminals from the 1920s to the mid-1950s. Millions of people were imprisoned during the Gulag's peak. Until the release of *Gulag Archipelago*, 1918–1956 (1973), by

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose title compares the Soviet Union's labor camps to an island chain, the Gulag name was virtually unknown in the West.

robinsonade. Any novel that deals with the castaway's survival on a secluded island and is portrayed in the style of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719–22).

socialist realism. A theory and technique of literary composition officially endorsed by the Soviet Union from 1932 through the mid-1980s. Socialist Realism was the only criterion for judging literary works during that period. It has been defined and reinterpreted over years of debate, but it remains a nebulous term. The construction of socialism and a classless society is the central topic of Socialist Realism. The writer might acknowledge imperfections in his portrayal of this struggle, but he was required to present socialist society in a favorable and optimistic perspective while also keeping in mind its wider historical significance.

Tatars. Also spelt Tartar, any member of numerous Turkic-speaking peoples which numbers in the late 20th century exceeded 5 million. Tatars resided mostly in west-central Russia along the central course of the Volga River and its subsidiary, the Kama, and afterwards east to the Ural Mountains. Kazakhstan and, to a lesser extent, western Siberia are also home to Tatars.

Volga Germans. Ethnic Germans who landed along the Volga River in southeastern European Russia, particularly near Saratov and to the south. Volga Germans were allowed to retain their German culture, language, customs, and churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Catholics, Moravians and Mennonites) after being recruited as immigrants to Russia in the 18th century. in 1941, and following the German invasion of the Soviet Union amid the Second World War, the Soviet government deemed the Volga Germans as potential collaborators and relocated thousands of them eastward.

ملخص

أصبح تأكيد الذات نقطة اهتمام لدراسات أكاديمية متعددة بسبب تأثيره النفسي والاجتماعي. تشدد الكاتبات الروسيات وخاصة جوزيل ياخينا ، على استفسار تأكيد الذات لدى النساء ، حيث يعتبر البحث عن الهوية والوعي الذاتي والتحرر العقلي لنفسية المرأة مطلبًا في المجتمع الأبوي. هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لفحص ، من مختلف وجهات نظر التحليل النفسي والنسوي ، السعي وراء تأكيد ذات زليخة ، الشخصية الرئيسية في زليخة تفتح عينيها. تُستخدم النظرية النسوية لإبراز صورة المرأة في البيئة الأبوية. وبالمثل ، فإن زليخة تفتح عينيها تطرح التجارب النسوية للشخصية الأنثوية الرئيسية وهي تصور هويتها فيما يتعلق بالبيئة الذكورية المحيطة بها. كما يتم الاعتماد على الحركة النسوية التحليلية النفسية كنظرية لفحص السلوك الذكوري القمعي وانفتاح الأنثى على القهر والاستسلام. من ناحية أخرى ، تستخدم الباحثة نهج التحليل النفسي لتفكيك ذاتية الشخصية الرئيسية زليخة ونضالها لتحقيق رحلة تأكيد الذات. يخدم التحرر العقلي للمرأة في تقوية السلوك الحازم على الذات لبطلنة الرواية لأنه يعيد تشكيل نفسيته ، في حين أن القواعد الأبوية المفروضة عليها حثت على انتهاك مثل هذه الاتفاقيات وساعدت في تحول زليخة

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظرية النسوية ، الهوية ، المجتمع الأبوي ، النسوية التحليلية النفسية ، تأكيد الذات ، تحرر المرأة